

United States Marine Hospital  
Emma Street, corner of Fleming  
Street  
Key West  
Monroe County  
Florida

HABS No. FL-194

HABS,  
FLA,  
44-KEY,  
22 -

PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. FL-194

## UNITED STATES MARINE HOSPITAL

Location: Emma Street at the corner of Fleming Street,  
Key West, Monroe County, Florida.

USGS Key West Quadrangle, Universal Transverse  
Mercator Coordinates: 17.418280. 2715600.

Present Owner  
and Occupant: United States Navy.

Present Use: Apartments, Quarters for U.S. Navy Officers and their  
dependents.

Significance: One of eight Marine Hospitals designed by Robert Mills, a  
famous early American architect and engineer who was a pro-  
tege of Thomas Jefferson, appointed architect of Public  
Buildings by Andrew Jackson. Mills designed many important  
Washington landmarks, including the Washington Monument.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1844-1845:
2. Architect: Robert Mills.
3. Original and subsequent owners: John W. Simonton purchased the Island of Key West in December of 1821. On August 16, 1844 Simonton sold a three quarter acre tract to the U.S. Government for the site of a Marine hospital. George M. Bibb, Secretary of Treasury signed the contract. (Folder 1844-1884, Records Group 121, National Archives and Records Service.).
4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: John W. Simonton, Key West.
5. Original plan and construction: A two-and-a-half story, stone and brick building, 100' x 45', with a full basement directly on grade. Two-story verandas, 12' x 56', extended between projecting end wings on the front and rear. Two cisterns, 18' long, were located in the basement at the southern end of the building. The remaining section of the basement contained the kitchen, storerooms, and laundry. Cross corridors connected the front and rear galleries on the first and second floors. A small attic contained a linen room. (Letter from William M. Kimball, superintendent, to William A. Potter, Supervising Architect, Washington, D.C. and Photograph, 1871, in Folder, 1844-1884, U.S. Marine Hospital, Key West, Florida, Record Group 121, National Archives and Record Service.)

6. Alterations and additions: The house has been extensively remodeled to accommodate multi-family housing. Additions were constructed on the southeast. The front veranda has been enclosed and infilled with brick. Additional interior and exterior stairways were constructed, and the fenestration was severely modified. The masonry portion of the building remains intact.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

John W. Simonton was the first American owner of the Island of Key West, having purchased it in the month of December 1821. Largely through his efforts the island shortly after was settled and designated as a United States port of entry. He not only sold the property for the Marine Hospital but was contractor for building and furnishing it.

During the Civil War the hospital was designated to accept patients of the United States Navy. The yellow fever epidemics were responsible for many deaths in the Union Forces stationed in this area. Dr. Robert Murray and Dr. J.W. Porter of the hospital staff were among the famous pioneers in treating yellow fever and in bringing about the quarantine laws that later adopted by not only Florida but the United States.

The building ceased to function as a Marine Hospital on February 15, 1943 and was converted to quarters for U.S. Navy Waves.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Original architectural drawings: Elevation and floor plans, signed "Robt Mills, Architect, City Washington, 1844" Folder, 1844-1884. Letters Received, U.S. Marine Hospital, Key West, Florida, Record Group 121, Box 123. National Archives and Records Center, Washington, D.C.
2. Old Views: Photograph, 1871. Folder, 1851-1876. Letters Received, Key West Florida Post Office and Courthouse (Old). General Correspondence, Public Buildings Service. Record Group 121, Box 123, National Archives and Records Service, Washington, D.C.
3. Bibliography:

Diddle, Alfred W., Medical events in the History of Key West 1, The Marine Hospital, Johns Hopkins Bulletin of History of Medicine 15:445-468. May 1944.

Folder. 1844-1884. Letters Received. U.S. Marine Hospital, Key West, Florida. General Correspondence, Public Buildings Service; contains specifications, Record Group 121, Box 123. National Archives and Records Service, Washington, D.C.

Folder, 1851-1876. Letters Received, Key West Florida Post Office and Courthouse (old), General Correspondence, Public Buildings Service, Record Group 121, Box 123. National Archives and Record Service, Washington, D.C.

Prepared by: Betty M. Bruce  
Old Island Restoration  
Foundations, Inc.  
Historian  
HABS-Key West Project  
September 1967

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: A plain, three-story masonry building designed by a major American architect well known for his Greek Revival style buildings. The building's numerous windows and two story veranda on both the front and the rear provided maximum ventilation and light and reflect its usage as a hospital and the salubrious climate of the locale.
2. Condition of fabric: Generally good.

### B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: 46' x 100', not including exterior stairways and additions to the southeast.
2. Foundations: Brick masonry, with the first floor directly on grade!
3. Structural system: Wood frame.
4. Wall construction and finish: Brick (where exposed) masonry walls 3'-0" thick throughout, painted stucco finish.
5. Stoops, exterior stairways: Modern masonry stairway to second floor at center of northeast elevation, wood columns supporting deck at third floor; wrought iron balustrade at stairway and deck; miscellaneous modern wood or metal stoops and stairways at the southeast elevation.
6. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: Central door on the northeast (front) is modern with sidelights. Each sidelight is six-over-four lights. a two-panel screen door has been installed. The openings are splayed with paneled reveals and plinth blocks.

- b. Windows and shutters: Both single and double hung sash windows with lights varying from two-over-two to four-over-four and six-over-six; modern metal awnings and insect screens, gray sandstone lintels and sills, some remaining shutter pintles.

7. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: Hip roof with terne sheet metal shingle covering.
- b. Cornice: Boxed cornice.

C. Description of Interior:

(Note: Due to multi-family occupancy and official restrictions, the interior of this building was inaccessible at the occasion of this survey. Data noted here results from the visit to one apartment.)

1. Floor plans:

- a. First floor: Storage spaces and fragments of stairway to the second floor cut off at ceiling; partitions are 3' thick with splayed openings.
- b. Second floor: Central stair hall (modern) with foyer, one bedroom apartments at each side of stair hall.
- c. Third floor: Central stair hall, two bedroom apartments at each side of stair hall.

2. Stairways: Interior stair hall, modern double stairways, "U" shaped stairs, boxed newel, two square balusters per tread; fragments of earlier wood stairway between first and second floor, straight run, no balustrade.

3. Flooring: Wood boards and strips, linoleum and plastic covering.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: Plaster on masonry, wall board with battens ceramic tile wainscot.

5. Doorways and doors: Modern doorways and doors except through splayed openings where two and four-panel doors occur.

6. Lighting: Modern electric.

7. Heating: None.

D. Site: This building is on the U.S. Naval Station, Key West, Florida, facing northeast and southwest; modern addition at the southeast, garage and drying yard to the southwest; concrete and asphalt walks and driveways.

Prepared by: F. Blair Reeves, AIA  
Supervising Architect  
HABS-Key West Project  
September 1967

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

These records were prepared in 1967 during a summer project jointly sponsored by the Old Island Restoration Foundation, Inc. of Key West, and the Historic American Buildings Survey. Twenty-two structures were recorded, ranging from commercial structures, residences and hospitals to a convent, a lighthouse, and the Memorial to the Victims of the disaster of the Battleship Maine.

The project was under the direction of F. Blair Reeves, AIA, Associate Professor, Department of Architecture, University of Florida. Measured drawings were prepared by student architects John D. Davenport and John F. Grimm of Texas A. and M. University, and John O. Crosby of the University of Florida. Mrs. Betty M. Bruce of the Old Island Restoration Foundation, Inc., and Professor Reeves were responsible for the historical and architectural data. They were assisted by members of the Foundation. J. Franks Brooks, Photographer, of Key West, supplied the photographs.